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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BAGHDAD 000946

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SUBJECT: PRT NINEWA: IN RABIYA DID ABDULLAH A STATELY
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Classified By: Deputy Political Counselor John G. Fox for reason 1.4 (d
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THIS IS A PROVINCIAL RECONSTRUCTION TEAM NINEWA MESSAGE.

¶1. (C) Summary: Sheikh Abdullah Hamed al-Yawer al-Shammari has parlayed control of the Rabiya port of entry, large tracts of irrigated farmland, and a close relationship with Coalition Forces (CF) into a strong position in the incoming Ninewa Provincial Council and administration. His relative strength vis--vis his Al Hudba partner, Atheel Alnujaifi, remains to be seen but will be a key factor in CF relations with the new administration. On that front, Abdullah is likely to be a constructive force. On Arab-Kurd tensions, Abdullah and Alnujaifi are fellow travelers, united by a common antipathy to the KDP. Abdullah's ability to convene large numbers of photogenic Iraqis and his Hollywood instincts for staging public events have influenced UNAMI thinking on disputed internal boundaries (DIBs). He is a rarity in Ninewa: a generally and openly pro-CF Sunni Arab who nonetheless loathes the KDP and is highly critical of what he believes is USG support for a Kurdish land-grab into Mosul. While maintaining the faade of a traditional Arab leader, Abdullah is a traditional leader of a different sort: a skilled practitioner of political patronage and scion of a wealthy family who bought political power through a modern sense of organization. His goal is to survive intact the withdrawal of CF, avoiding a Kurdish pincer from Sinjar and Zumar. Abdullah is a movie-lover with a fondness for the oeuvre of Brad Pitt, a thespian whose humanitarian endeavors, he believes, illustrate the cynicism of the Kurds. End summary.

¶2. (C) Abdullah is a post-modern Sheikh; we do not think he draws his growing influence in Ninewa from traditional forms of authority. Rather, his skillful use of money, media and home cooking has allowed him to build what we regard as a faade of customary leadership. Abdullah can have it both ways. He can pull off the oriental satrap routine with the practiced eye of spectacle-manager. At the same time, he cultivates local and foreign reporters, arranges complex media buys on satellite TV and grafts himself onto popular issues. For example, when Christians were displaced from Mosul in late 2008, he donated funds to Tal Kayf Mayor Basim Bello for the relief effort. His model is Brad Pitt selflessly building homes in post-Katrina New Orleans, an act of philanthropy that contrasts with the KDP which, he believes, pretended to come to the aid of Ninewa but actually used Ninewa's suffering as cover for a land grab.

¶3. (C) Abdullah's Justice and Reform Party) founded in early 2008 -- controls nine or ten of Al Hudba's 19 seats in the 37-seat Ninewa Provincial Council. He recently told us that, in return for supporting the gubernatorial candidacy of Atheel Alnujaifi, he expects to be able to name the Chairman of the Provincial Council and one of two Vice Governors. He also expects his share of provincial appointments, including some of the five civil-service assistant governors. Abdullah

has told us that all his people in the provincial government will be instructed to work with US personnel, military and civilian. He has also told us that this is a position that he has successfully imposed on Alnujaifi. Antipathy to the KDP is one of the only common denominators between Abdullah and Alnujaifi; we suspect that their alliance will prove easier to have built than to govern. We also suspect that Qeasier to have built than to govern. We also suspect that each regards the other as the junior partner in the coalition.

¶4. (SBU) Abdullah recently turned 40; he has one wife and six children. He was born in Rabiya, educated in Mosul through high school, then the Law Faculty at Baghdad University. Law studies plus a fondness bordering on addiction to American movies gave him a good foundation in English. Regular interaction with CF and PRT personnel over the years has given him the ability to have fairly sophisticated conversations in English. (Note: He recently told us that he usually watches three or four movies per day, beginning in the late evening and continuing into the wee hours.) Up by the crack of 1100 on most days, the Sheikh receives visitors, admires his horses, walks the grounds of his estate, but never leaves. He has an outstanding warrant in Mosul on a four year-old smuggling charge, fears arrest (or worse) in Syria, and will not even visit his family in Amman unless we help procure the visa. He has suffered from high blood pressure.

¶5. (SBU) Abdullah is the second of four brothers. His uncle, Sheikh Muhsin al-Ajil al-Yawer al-Shammari, is the Paramount Sheikh of the Shammari Confederation. Sheikh Muhsin has lived in London since 1978; Abdullah is widely but not universally recognized within Ninewa as the acting head of

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the tribe. His cousin, Gazi Al-Yawar, was formerly the Vice President of the Iraqi Transitional Government. His father is deceased, but once was put under house arrest by the previous regime. Though Abdullah says the family was never Ba'athist, he flies the Saddam-era flag over the grounds of his estate. He eldest brother lives in Saudi Arabia. He second brother, Ajil, recently returned to Iraq after years living in Amman. His youngest brother, Shammam, manages the family's farmland. The family is Sunni, although the Shammam have both Sunni and Shia branches; to our knowledge Abdullah is observant but moderate.

¶6. (C) Shammam land contains the Rabiya Port of Entry (POE), the main border crossing point between Ninewa Province and Syria. The POE is a highly lucrative source of patronage and, per US military reporting, it is jointly controlled by the three main families of the Shammam tribe: the Yawer, Rakan and Faisal. Abdullah reportedly owns the Ajil Yawer Truck Park, the Faisals the Al-Hanuf trucking company, and the Rakans the United Arab Truck Park. Shammam kinfolk hold the key positions on the POE and in the government entities represented there. The warrant for Abdullah's arrest likely originates with Ninewa Governor Kashmoula, who loathes Abdullah and maintains that the Sheikh 'kJOQJMQin feeding (literally and figuratively) his guests that which they came to consume. He perceives threat from the KDP, and we understand his behavior primarily in that context. End Comment.
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